

Introduction

Opportunity Learning Academy fully recognises its responsibility for the protection of children and adults at risk and for safeguarding and promoting welfare to all learners and staff.

Opportunity Learning Academy is committed to providing a secure environment for learners, and staff where learners feel safe and are kept safe.

All staff at Opportunity Learning Academy are aware that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility irrespective of the role they undertake or whether their role has direct contact or responsibility for learners or not.

Opportunity Learning Academy aims to create and maintain a safe environment for all learners, staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors to our training centre or delivery premises.

This policy aims to:

- To promote an environment that is safe, where staff and learners treat each other with mutual respect and develop good relationships built on trust.
 - To raise the awareness of all staff, teaching, and non-teaching, of the need to safeguard young people and adults at risk and of their rights and responsibilities in identifying and reporting possible cases of abuse or neglect.
 - To provide a systematic means of supporting young people and adults at risk, known or thought to be at risk of harm.
 - To ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken by Opportunity Learning Academy to ensure that learners are safeguarded.
 - To ensure that relevant safeguarding information about a young person or adult at risk is disseminated to appropriate staff within the centre on a 'need to know' basis.
 - To ensure that partner organisations who support the delivery of our programmes have appropriate safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures in place.
 - To involve learners in the decisions on safeguarding concerns and ensure they are shared with relevant agencies (e.g., LADO) when appropriate. Also, with parents of children (unless advised against this by the Local Safeguarding Board.)
 - To ensure that all staff who have access to young people or adults at risk have been checked for their suitability through safer recruitment procedures.

- To ensure all staff will receive appropriate Safeguarding training
- The Academy Manager will be responsible for the implementation of the child and adults at risk protection policy and procedure

DEFINITIONS

Safeguarding: Preventative or precautionary planning and measures against potential harm or damage to someone.

Child Protection: The policy and procedures in place to protect and/or remove a child from harm or risk of harm.

Abuse: Any treatment that causes harm. This can include physical, sexual, emotional abuse, and/or neglect.

Child protection issue: An issue raising a concern about harm or risk of harm to a child or young person.

Child: A child is defined in law as a person under the age of 18 years.

Adult at risk: An adult aged 18 and over who is unable to protect themselves from abuse and neglect, due to a care and support need which is permanent or temporary which is either met or not met by the local authority.

Young person: A person aged up to 25 years old.

Staff: 'Staff' means all employees, full-time and part time, and all agency, contractors contract and ad hoc support

DSO: Designated Safeguarding Lead.

LADO: Local Authority Designated Officer.

KEY SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

- All learners have the right to be safeguarded from harm and exploitation so all complaints, allegations or suspicions must be taken seriously.
- The procedures laid out in this document must be followed whenever an allegation is made that a learner has been abused.
- Promises of confidentiality should not be given as the matter may develop in such a way that these might not be able to be honoured.
- If the complaint comes directly from the learner, questions should be kept to the minimum necessary to understand what is being alleged. Leading questions must always be avoided.

- A full record of any discussions must be made immediately after any conversations with the learner and referred to the Designated Safeguarding Officer that same day.
- Opportunity Learning Academy have a responsibility to provide a safe environment and minimise risks of harm to learners' welfare

Related Legislation

- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2021)
- Education and Training (Welfare of Children) Act (2021)
- Care Act (2014)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act (2006)
- Children's Act (2004)
- Equalities Act (2010)

Safeguarding describes the actions we take to ensure the safety and well-being of children, young people, apprentices and vulnerable adults in our care.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment. Somebody may abuse or neglect by inflicting harm or by failing to act to prevent harm. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults or by another child or children.

Physical

Actual or likely physical harm and/or failure to prevent physical injury (or suffering), including fabricated or induced illness (FII).

Sexual

Involves forcing or enticing a child, young person or vulnerable adult to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not they are aware of what is happening.

Emotional

Persistent emotional maltreatment of a child which may cause severe and adverse effects on the child's emotional development.

Neglect

Persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's mental and physical health or development. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Harm

The ill treatment or impairment of health or development, including impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.

Like all forms of child sex abuse, child sexual exploitation:

- can affect any child or young person (male or female) under the age of 18 years, including 16 and 17 year olds who can legally consent to have sex;
- can still be abuse even if the sexual activity appears consensual;
- can include both contact (penetrative and non-penetrative acts) and noncontact sexual activity;
- can take place in person or via technology, or a combination of both;
- can involve force and/or enticement-based methods of compliance and may, or may not, be accompanied by violence or threats of violence;
- may occur without the child or young person's immediate knowledge (e.g. through others copying videos or images they have created and posted on social media);

- can be perpetrated by individuals or groups, males or females, and children or adults. The abuse can be a one-off occurrence or a series of incidents over time, and range from opportunistic to complex organised abuse; and is typified by some form of power imbalance in favour of those perpetrating the abuse. Whilst age may be the most obvious, this power imbalance can also be due to a range of other factors including gender, sexual identity, cognitive ability, physical strength, status, and access to economic or other resources.

Sexual violence and abuse

Sexual violence and abuse is where any behaviour thought to be of a sexual nature is unwanted and takes place without consent. Sexual violence and abuse can be physical, psychological, verbal or online. Any behaviour of a sexual nature that causes distress is considered sexual violence or abuse.

Sexual Violence is physical sexual acts without the consent of the other person or when the other person is unable to give consent.

Domestic Abuse

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to:

- psychological;
- physical;
- sexual;
- financial
- emotional

Exposure to domestic abuse and/or violence can have a serious, long lasting emotional and psychological impact on children. In some cases, a child may blame themselves for the abuse or may have had to leave the family home as a result. Domestic abuse affecting young people can also occur within their personal relationships, as well as in the context of their home life.

Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs. It is illegal in the UK and a form of child abuse with long-lasting harmful consequences. There is a statutory duty to report to the police where FGM appears to have been carried out on a girl under 18 (either through disclosure by the victim or visual evidence).

So-called ‘honour-based’ abuse

So-called ‘honour-based’ violence (HBV) encompasses incidents or crimes which have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community, including female genital mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, and practices such as breast ironing. Abuse committed in the context of preserving “honour” often involves a wider network of family or community pressure and can include multiple perpetrators. It is important to be aware of this dynamic and additional risk factors when deciding what form of safeguarding action to take. All forms of HBV are abuse (regardless of the motivation) and should be handled and escalated as such.

Forced Marriage

Forcing a person into a marriage is a crime in England and Wales. A forced marriage is one entered into without the full and free consent of one or both parties and where violence, threats or any other form of coercion is used to cause a person to enter into a marriage. Threats can be physical or emotional and psychological. A lack of full and free consent can be where a person does not consent or where they cannot consent (if they have learning disabilities, for example). Nevertheless, some communities use religion and culture as a way to coerce a person into marriage. Schools and colleges can play an important role in safeguarding children from forced marriage.

Peer on Peer Abuse

Children can abuse other children, young people, and adults. This is generally referred to as peer on peer abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, upskirting or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.

Serious Violent Crime

Unexplained gifts/new possessions – these can indicate children, young people and vulnerable adults have been approached by/involved with individuals associated with criminal networks/gangs, increased absence from school/ college, change in friendship/relationships with others/groups, significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm/significant change in wellbeing, signs of assault/unexplained injuries.

Cuckooing

Cuckooing is a practice where people take over a person's home and use the property to facilitate exploitation. There are different types of cuckooing:

- Using the property to deal, store or take drugs
- Using the property for sex work
- Taking over the property as a place for them to live
- Taking over the property to financially abuse the tenant.

The most common form of cuckooing is where drug dealer/gangs take over a person's home through intimidation and use it to store or distribute drugs.

County Lines

County Lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas [within the UK], using dedicated mobile phone lines or other forms of "deal line". A common feature in county lines drug supply is the exploitation of young and vulnerable people. The dealers will frequently target children and adults - often with mental health or addiction problems - to act as drug runners or move cash so they can stay under the radar of law enforcement.

Sexual Consent

Consent is an agreement between participants to engage in sexual activity. Consent should be clearly and freely communicated. A verbal and affirmative expression of consent can help both partners to understand and respect each other's boundaries. It should happen every time for every type of activity. Consenting to one activity, one time, does not mean someone gives consent for other activities or for the same activity on other occasions.

- Consent cannot be given by individuals who are underage, intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or asleep or unconscious. If someone agrees to an activity under pressure of intimidation or threat, that isn't considered consent because it was not given freely.
- Unequal power dynamics, such as engaging in sexual activity with an employee or student, also means that consent cannot be freely given due to social perception

On-line abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet. It can happen across any device that's connected to the web, like computers, tablets and mobile phones. And it can happen anywhere online, including, text messages and messaging apps, social media, emails, online chats, online gaming and live streaming sites. Children, young people and adults can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers. It might be part of other abuse which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming. Or the abuse might only happen online. Children, young people and vulnerable adults may experience different types of online abuse such as; cyberbullying, emotional abuse, grooming, sexting, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, with the signs being very much the same.

Abuse can occur in a family, institutional or community setting by someone they know, or more rarely, by a stranger, for example via the internet. The following can be signs of abuse:

Physical

Unexplained (or repeated) bruises, burns, fractures, lacerations or abrasions, swollen areas, a general deterioration well-being, a variation in eating habits (e.g., overeating, loss of appetite), weight loss for no apparent reason, personal hygiene issues, evidence of delayed or inappropriate treatment for injuries, a lack of adult supervision on a daily basis, difficulty walking or sitting.

Sexual

Pre-occupation with sexual matters, sexual activity through words, play or drawings, severe sleep disturbances with fears and phobias, being sexually provocative with adults (in the case of children and young people). Pain or itching in the genital area, bruising or bleeding near genital area, sexually transmitted disease, stomach pains, discomfort when walking or sitting down.

Emotional

Regression in behaviour, nervousness, sudden under-achievement, inappropriate relationships with peers/adults, attention seeking, running away/stealing/lying, looking uncared-for. Neurotic behaviour, e.g. sulking, hair twisting, rocking, being unable to play/interact, fear of making mistakes, sudden speech disorders, self-harm, delay in emotional development.

Harm

The physical signs of neglect may include: constant hunger, sometimes stealing food from others; being constantly dirty or 'smelly'; loss of weight, or being constantly underweight; inappropriate clothing for the conditions. Changes in behaviour can also indicate neglect.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation

Appearing with unexplained gifts or new possessions, associating with other young people involved in exploitation, having older boyfriends or girlfriends, suffering from sexually transmitted infections or getting pregnant, changes in emotional well-being, misuse of drugs and alcohol, missing for periods of time or regularly come home late and regularly missing school or education or do not take part in education.

Children are classed as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age, is living independently or is in further education, is a member of the armed forces, is in hospital or in custody in the secure estate, does not change his/her status or entitlements to services or protection.

A child in need is defined under the Children Act 1989 as a child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable level of health or development, or whose health and development is likely to be significantly or further impaired, without the provision of services; or a child who is disabled. Local authorities are required to provide services for children in need for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting their welfare.

Local authorities, with the help of other organisations as appropriate, have a duty to make enquires under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Such enquiries enable them to decide whether they should take any action to safeguard and promote the child's welfare and must be initiated where there are concerns about maltreatment, including all forms of abuse and neglect, female genital mutilation or other so-called honour based violence, and extra-familial threats like radicalisation and sexual exploitation.

The policy helps to ensure the Academy is able to protect learners and apprentices that are studying with the Academy. It highlights key signs and symptoms to staff and employers to reduce the risk and protect against abuse towards learners and apprentices. To support learners and apprentices there is a published process detailing how to report concerns and/or seek advice and guidance in the office.

The purpose of adult safeguarding is to prevent harm and reduce the risk of abuse or neglect to adults with care and support needs. The statutory framework introduced under the Care Act applies to any person aged 18 or above who:

- Has needs for care and support (regardless of the level of need and whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs);
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of abuse or neglect; and
- As a result of those needs, is unable to protect themselves against the abuse or neglect or the risk of it.

Responsibilities:

Employees, self-employed and contractors

- All employees are required to familiarise themselves with this policy and procedure and follow this at all times
- If you have concerns about the welfare of a child, young person or vulnerable adult and believe that they may be at risk of, you must share that concern confidentially with the Academy Manager immediately
- Any information shared should always be accurate, up to date and shared appropriately and securely with only the person or people who need to know and limited to information relevant for the purpose. If you have any doubts about when to share safeguarding information, discuss the situation with the Academy Manager
- Everyone must complete their required Safeguarding Awareness Training to help increase their knowledge of safeguarding issues

Academy Manager

- Support, encourage and monitor the completion of required Safeguarding Awareness Training
- Adopt the Academies culture of vigilance and lead by example.
- Ensure that risks are managed effectively and deal appropriately with issues raised
- Creating an ethos which upholds core values of shared responsibility and wellbeing for all, while promoting respect, equality and diversity and understanding
- Adopting stringent and transparent safeguarding practices which recognise, support and protect individuals who might be at risk of abuse or demonstrating signs and symptoms
- Sharing information about safeguarding and good practice with other key stakeholders and external agencies
- Providing training opportunities for staff and volunteers to enable them to continually update their safeguarding knowledge
- Sharing information and concerns with agencies who need to know and ensuring we involve learners, parents, staff and others in an appropriate way
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision

- Ensuring that this policy is implemented across the organisation appropriate training is in place that is relevant and regularly reviewed and updated
- Take lead responsibility for managing child protection issues and cases in their centre, operation or team.
- Provide advice and support to other staff, making referrals to and liaising with external parties as necessary, such as the local authority and other agencies, like the DBS or Police.
- Be aware of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) and Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)
- Be familiar with local referral procedures.
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of a referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, under confidential cover as quickly as possible (e.g. within a working day).

Confidentiality and storage of Safeguarding

All staff must maintain confidentiality about safeguarding cases and are shared internally on a need to-know basis. Learners must be informed that any disclosures or concerns that are raised cannot be kept secret and may have to be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and external agencies. A safeguarding report must be completed fully and accurately, using word for word information wherever possible. This must be saved using a password protection and emailed within the same day to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSO will keep a central record of all safeguarding reports that are in a lockable cabinet or restricted access online folder that complies with GDPR. Active cases will be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary for each individual circumstance and closed cases will be signed off by the DSO and archived.

Policy/Process Review Date

This policy/process is reviewed every 12 months with the next review date being 30th April 2023